CAIN

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CAIN

CAIN

A DRAMA

BY

GEORGE CABOT LODGE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1904

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Published November 1904

TO THE

DEATHLESS MEMORY

OF

JESUS OF NAZARETH

SEER AND SAYER

OF TRUTH,

WHO WAS BELIEVED ONLY BY THE POOR AND OUT-CAST, WHO WAS RECOGNIZED BY ALL REPUTABLE AND RESPECTABLE PEOPLE AS THE AVOWED ENEMY OF LAW, ORDER AND RELIGION, AND WHO WAS AT LAST BROUGHT TO HIS DEATH BY THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH THROUGH THE OPERATION OF THE ESTABLISHED COURTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE,

THIS POEM IS INSCRIBED

WITH MEASURELESS

LOVE.

HUMANA ANTE OCULOS FOEDE CUM VITA JACERET
IN TERRIS OPPRESSA GRAVI SUB RELIGIONE
QUAE CAPUT A CAELI REGIONIBUS OSTENDEBAT
HORRIBILI SUPER ASPECTU MORTALIBUS INSTANS,
PRIMUM . . . HOMO MORTALIS TOLLERE CONTRA
EST OCULOS AUSUS PRIMUSQUE OBSISTERE CONTRA,
QUEM NEQUE FAMA DEUM NEC FULMINA NEC MINITANTI
MURMURE COMPRESSIT CAELUM, SED EO MAGIS ACREM
INRITAT ANIMI VIRTUTEM, EFFRINGERE UT ARTA
NATURAE PRIMUS PORTARUM CLAUSTRA CUPIRET.
ERGO VIVIDA VIS ANIMI PERVICIT, ET EXTRA
PROCESSIT LONGE FLAMMANTIA MOENIA MUNDI
ATQUE OMNE IMMENSUM PERAGRAVIT MENTE ANIMOQUE,
UNDE REFERT NOBIS VICTOR QUID POSSIT ORIRI,
QUID NEQUEAT, FINITA POTESTAS DENIQUE CUIQUE
QUANAM SIT RATIONE ATQUE ALTE TERMINUS HAERENS.
QUARE RELIGIO PEDIBUS SUBIECTA VICISSIM
OPTERITUR, NOS EXAEQUAT VICTORIA CAELO.

LUCR. LIB. I. 62–79.

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CAIN

CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA:

ADAM

EVE

CAIN

ABEL

THE VOICE OF GOD

ACT I

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GENESIS

CHAPTER II

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil* thou shalt not eat of it: *for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

. . . . . .

CHAPTER III

1. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4. And the serpent said unto the woman, *Ye shall not surely die:*

5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

. . . . . .

22. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: *and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:*

23. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER IV

1. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

2. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

. . . . . .

A vast, naked plain. Mountains in the remote background. In the foreground a rude tent of skins. The dark twilight of the first flush of dawn. No sound or motion is anywhere in the world.

Time: early spring; the twenty-eighth year since the birth of Cain.

Eve appears at the door of the tent and looks forth toward the sunrise.

EVE

The rapt silence! The dark twilight!—It dawns!
The multitude of the ineffable stars
That lamped the viewless parapets of heaven,
Melt in the light like pearls in golden wine;
The void globe of the calm firmament
Glows; the immemorable ecstasy
Thrills in the vital fabric of creation,
And — hark! — a bird wakes somewhere in the world!
Somewhere a burst seed splits the naked sod,
Somewhere a flower folded at evening
Petal by petal bares its inmost heart
In perfect trust and drinks the dewfall!—Life,
O Life, imperishable and resistless! Life,
Fragile as joy and free as destiny!
O breath of life tender and passionate,

Sweet breath of sap and imminent foliage
Blown thro' the level ether and low light! —

From within the tent, the voice of ADAM, talking in his sleep.

The voice of ADAM

Give me the fruit! How fair it is! It seems
As it were a globe of light — give me the fruit!
His eyes are strange and glad and perilous! —
Eve, hast thou wondered how his eyes are strange? —
Nay then — my soul is strong and I will eat!
Give me the fruit, give me the heritage! —
Yea! I will wander in the sky-gardens
And meet with level eyes the vision of God!
Give me the fruit!

EVE

Adam!

The voice of ADAM

— the deed is done!
Silence! Silence! The deathless deed is done!

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See how he stares! — His coils are flecked with flame,
His eyes challenge! — O God! what comes to pass? —
A wind of flight stirs in the wings of Peace
And peril haunts the glades of Paradise —

A pause. EVE listens intently.

The voice of ADAM

My soul cowers! — What have I done? — Crouch low,
Woman, crouch low! Pray God the night will suddenly
Cover us from his ken! Eve! Eve! — His voice,
The voice of God! — Justice, Omnipotent,
Justice! The guilt is alien to my soul —
I say not mine, not mine the sin, Lord God!
The woman tempted me and I did eat!

EVE

O vain repentance!

ADAM

Staggering forth, still unawakened, from the tent.

— Eve! — Utterly lost!
His hand has loosed the four relentless winds
Against this delicate toy of His creation,
And lifted out of Chaos the elder night,
And set against the paths to Paradise
Seraphim and the sword of circling flame!
And we — we go beyond! O night and death! —
O woman, woman, woman, — where is Eden?

At this point ADAM wakes suddenly. A long pause. Slowly he regains complete consciousness, still shaken and afraid.

The light — the life — Eve! —

EVE

Adam —

ADAM

Art thou there? —

EVE

Take both my hands —

ADAM

— the dream! —

EVE

Ghosts! Ghosts!

ADAM

— the dream!

Visions! Visions! — O shield me, take my hands!

Let my face lie against thy breast a while —
I dreamed of Paradise and God — no more,
No more! I am too shaken utterly!
Vague am I, vague and desolate as mist!
My soul suffers — O heart, how sad it is!
Life is too tragic of its memories —
Hold me — I need thy tenderness, I need
Thy calm and pitiful hands to comfort me.

EVE

Be still a little, all will be well I know.

ADAM

Say nothing more, for naught avails me now!
There is no other balm but silence. Mine
Are woes too real for words, too wild for tears.

EVE

See out of heaven how there is shed upon thee
The light of dawn —

ADAM

All other light is lost —
The light of God, the light of happiness! —
O memories, dreams! —

EVE

Vain agonies!

ADAM

Vain joys,
Vain life, vain death, — what is not vain and void?
The soul dries up with fear to think of it!
God knows my dreams are very terrible!
God knows there is no laughter in my life,
And in my slumbers no forgetfulness!

EVE

I say, vain agonies! Life cannot be
Itself a glad or sad thing; grief and joy
Are mere interpretations of the soul,
Brief and changeable gloom or splendour shed
Down the wide ways of Life's eternal sea!
Joy is the temper of heroic minds —

ADAM

Grief is the stern acknowledgment of truth! —
Hadst thou my dreams! — O where is Paradise? —

EVE

Peace, peace, distracted soul! —

ADAM

No more! No more! —
No more the inviolable peace of God,
The tideless seas of bright beatitude
Spread like the aura of His steadfast soul!
No more the innocent communion
With Him whose voice pealed thro' the formless void

Till star by star the infinite creation
Woke like bright echoes on the vacant night!
No more the voice of cherubim that seemed
A pulse of light in the celestial dome!
No more, against the flashing slopes of heaven,
Seraphim poised on pinions blind with gold! —
Eden no more, the perfect glades no more!

EVE

I know full well there can be nevermore
The joy that was — to-morrow and to-day
Cannot be nourished with past happiness,
For past is past. — Not life alone is changed:
We are such men and women as we are,
Not as we were beneath God's tutelage,
When Paradise was a delicate play-garden
Where, in contentment of fair things, we lived
So childish-glad of his beneficence.
Now are we not withholden by God's grace
From all mortality; we know at last
How we are fashioned of the selfsame clay
Whence his creative hands divinely shaped
Behemoth and the bird of paradise.

On the bare uplands of reality
Our feet walk level with the whole of life!
Therefore the tender and impermanent joys,
The warm, frail happiness of mortal things
Are ours at last, our earned inheritance.

ADAM

They are not mine! — I know not what you mean!
I am one man to-day and yesterday:
I am that Adam of God's handiwork
Who, perfect thro' the paths of Paradise,
Walked hand in hand with happiness a while, —
Who now is haunted of shrill memories
And anxious dreams! —

EVE

Adam — be resolute!
I too have dreamed, I too have memories
Of joy and violence and tragedy!
Your past is mine, we share to-day. Say this:
What was has never been, there yet can be

No less than is, nor more than is to come ;
And life at last, at least is ours !

ADAM

Is life
This desolate sentience, this distressful toil,
This pain, this pitiful treasure of mean days ?
Is life indeed this scant monotony
Of being, — this heart of violent agonies
And scared impermanent felicity,
This body of labor and lust and terrible tears,
This brain where everlasting memory beats
Dull as the pulse of a sick artery ? —
Then were it altogether a happy thing
If this magnificence of stainless light
Were quenched and night were set insuperable
Over this theatre of our desolation
And life so disinherited of delight
Abolished from this perishable dust !
If this be life what lovelier word befits
The clear and innocent ecstasies of Eden,
The candid rapture roused in body and soul

When dawn with lifted, fiery finger-tips
Kindled the dark and dreamless void of sleep,
And once again the vision of Paradise,
The endless melody of shallow waters,
Perfumes of foliage wet with silver light,
The sound of dewfall thro' the fragrant gloom
Of windless forests and the cries of birds
Scattered upon the spiritual silence
Like stars or dewdrops on the twilight — all
The miracle of God's sublime creation
Returned to consciousness !

EVE

Ask me no more !
Ask me no more ! — such tears of mine are fallen
On the wild harp of memory that now
The strings are lax and faint, — they sing no more !
Well do I know the past was otherwise
And more — yet also haply something less !

Thought wearies of the eternal task! — at least
The austere and passionate life of liberty —

ADAM

Is strange to God's beneficent intent
And steadfast will!

EVE

Yet is it come to pass! —
The core of truth is darkness to the soul. —
I cannot tell — I suffer of such things
As swell beyond the shape of any words.
Only in silence can we bear with fate,
And find the joy to live not pitiably
Nor infidel — lest all were lost in vain!

ADAM

In vain! In vain! — the word rings void as life!
In vain the irremediable woe,
In vain the exile from God's father-house,
In vain the lamentable days and nights
Of terrible remembrance and tense dreams! —
Vain hopes, vain tears, vain agonies! —

EVE

Be still! —
The dream has robbed thy soul of fortitude,
Swelled thy remorseful heart with futile tears,
And crazed thy brain with vain imaginings.
I know too well the face of thy despair,
Too well! — therefore be still that I may live!
I too have felt the intolerable scorn
And borne the task that seemed unbearable.

ADAM

The scorn of labour and the task of tears,
The scorn of memory and the task of life,
The scorn of hope, the task of patience —
Eve,
I wait: — the end is silence. Look beyond! —
Death even shall haply ease the exhausted
flesh
And pour perpetual oblivion,
Shadow and senseless silence on the soul!

EVE

Shadow and silence and oblivion —
Is death indeed so absolute a term?

Is death a magic of such sovereign cure?
Is death a silence so eventual? —
It cannot be! If life must find a term
Vain is the passionate utterance of life,
Vain the sore travail in which my womb conceived
The stalwart children of thy generation! —
It cannot be! What tho' the hand of death
Shall smite my mouth with silence utterly
And feed spring flowers of my carrion? —
Yet is eternity within me! — Hark!
Whispers, whispers of immortality!
As it were a shell found inland, so is life
Fulfilled with murmurs of an infinite sea!
Soul is the Pilgrim of Eternity,
And Life and Death in long processional
Chequer the pathways of its endless march
Like day and night: a strife and then a sleep,
Darkness and light, a song, a silence — so
They pass: the Pilgrim and the Path endure!
Adam! Adam! — I say thou canst as well

Measure the soul in terms of life and death
As lay a foot-rule to infinity!

ADAM

Be still! Here in the vigour of my days
I search the paths of time with sleepless eyes:
The void prospect of eternity
Glitters with ghosts of lunacy and fear!
My soul shudders! — I find no goal of light,
No guerdon of great deeds nor any hope
Save of the ambushed death that chokes with dust
The wolves of memory at the heels of life!
Death is the almshouse for the wayfarer,
The prize, the goal, the journey's end, the sleep!

EVE

Perchance — perchance — where 's truth? the absolute
Is never learned yet faith is justified,
The faith of life that is and is to be.
Soul wanders blindly in a labyrinth,
Grasping for guidance one by one the threads,

Sombre or splendid, that at last combine
To weave the cosmic tapestry of truth.
Perfection lies beyond! — yet momently
Visions dawn, vistas of infinite light
Open — and close, yet leave their afterglow
To guide the wandering of the errant feet
Of the earth-children!

ADAM

Heart, O Heart of passion!
O Heart of tears! — canst thou console thy sorrow
With such vain raptures of imagination,
And make with fevers of a mind diseased
Roseate the unrelenting face of truth? —
Thy faith is pitiful!

EVE

Not mine alone! —
I learn my secret from the lips of life:
Words of my gospel are bird-melodies,
Pale lotos ripening in the pond-waters,
The hollow murmur of the winds of spring

Thro' forests soft with imminent foliage,
Rose hyacinth and white anemone
And golden crocus, songs and perfumes shed
Thro' twilight, and the rush of plunging streams,
And sea-storms, and the native, violent lust
Of mating animals;—yea, from all acts of life
Transpire the faith, the measureless love, the clear
Simplicity of all heroic deeds! —
Sing, Spirit Divine! O lips of Life
Thrilled with immortal whispers, heart, O heart
Of Life, sing on! — my soul shall hear thy voice,
Shall sing thy song, O heart of Life! O lips
Of Life! and say — The crown, the prize, the pæan
Dull the magnificence of noble deeds!
Recompense is the measure of mean aims
And small achievements: toil may earn a wage
And strife a slumber, but the act of life,
Like all heroic deeds and spiritual,

Is wrought and tested in eternity!
Its parturitions prove too pure a faith
To ask a goal or seek a prize beyond!

ADAM

Poor Soul! — misery and sin have crazed thy brain!
Life is no other than a senseless lust:
What can the grosser nature signify?
Knowledge is God's alone; by His sole grace
We read the legend of unchanging truth:
Hope in His favour; for the rest, despair!

EVE

Hope in God's favour — hope of Paradise —
Hope of what was, of what no more shall be? —

ADAM

— Lost, lost beyond recall!

EVE

— beyond recall! —
Therefore not lost in vain! The soul inures

To new desires, new hope, new powers, new truth!
O hope no more what was or what shall be! —
Lost is God's favour, lost is Paradise,
Lost the desire and hope of what has been,
And lost is even the blackness of despair
Whereof His wrath fulfilled me!

ADAM

Eve —

EVE

I say
We knew despair how dire an agony
It is, that night beneath the starless shroud
Of dark and thunder and whirlwind and shrill cries,
Whereunder earth seemed as a shattered ship
Derelict on the seas of dissolution! —

ADAM

When by his wrath was loosed against creation

The violence of elemental things! —
Woe beyond utterance!

EVE

Hear me! — suddenly
Forth from the pits of palpable blackness sprang
The dawn, and tore apart with hands of flame
Night's cere-cloth on its brows! — delirious,
Terrified, fallen, — free! I glimpsed again
The clear skies fresh and spiritual as song,
The life-beneficent and tender light,
The earth, this earth of graves and growing flowers!
Breathless and dumb, with eyes thirsty of vision,
I saw the impenetrable dome of night,
The walls of dark that seemed immutable,
Flicker to flame, while from their ruins fell
Embers of twilight thro' the storm-tossed airs!
And then, Adam, O then the gates of light —
Then, as I stared — sprang wide within me: Dawn

Broke in my soul! I was ineffably
Glad of unutterable things! — it seemed
Triumph was won, a miracle was wrought,
A deed of love and passionate liberty
Accomplished! Scornful of my night's despair,
Against the deep skies of eternity
The stars of life shone steadfast and the stars
Of faith, — the faith of life! And then, and then —
Sun rose resplendent, witness to the truth!
I knew in that surpassing hour, since day
And dark were faithful in their periods,
That life and death could not be less nor fail
Their full return!

ADAM

Then life's return is pain! —
For all my days are very lamentable,
And all my nights that should be smooth and void
Are fevered with intolerable visions,

And all my dreams of death are dark and dumb,
As of a peril and a mystery. —
Yet am I nowise cringed before my woes!
Nay! — tho' my life is bruised with sore affliction
And dire repentance blasts my happiness,
Tho' in remembrance Paradise forever
Blooms with fresh light and flowers ineffable,
Clear pieties and peaceful innocence,
Against the gloom of this grieved sentience
Of violence and starvation, yet I bear,
Scornful of tears, the grief and scorn of life!
Faith is the stern, austere acknowledgment
And dumb obedience to the will of God:
Such faith my soul has kept inviolable!
What tho' He crush me, is He not the Lord!
Therefore my hands have torn the thrifty sod
And lured to fruitfulness the fragile seed.
I serve and wait; but nowise shall my soul
Yield to the lure of perishable joys
Nor scarf the eyes of Truth with gossamer
Of delicate hope or fond imaginings.
Never within my heart shall cowardice

Whore with imagination to achieve
A false and unsubstantial happiness.

CAIN and ABEL enter unperceived from the tent.

I will be stern and just and absolute:
Thus only can the soul of man preserve
What shreds are left of calm and dignity.
Therefore, Woman, I say forbear thy speech! —
And Thou, O Lord of Life, Magnificent God,
Craftsman of miracles whose labour caused
Mighty establishment of heaven and earth,
Whose hand shaped chaos and tamed rebellious suns
And wrought the hosts of heaven to harmony,
Grooved perilous pitfalls for the unresting seas,
Lifted these naked uplands of the world,
Pillared on high the sapphire dome of heaven
And gave fair ordinance to the wayward hours—
Grant me, O God, to say — "Thy will be done!"
With level lips, obedient to the last!

CAIN

Father! — what say'st thou? Have I heard
aright? —
Obedient? —

EVE

Cain! —

ADAM

His will be done!

ABEL

Amen!

EVE

Cain! Cain!

CAIN

His will and mine and thine be done! —
Amen! — 't is well! His will and mine are
twain,
Yet each may still be free and absolute.
Is my life less because you live? am I
Weak by your strength, by your hope hope-
less? — Nay!
A myriad lives cannot diminish me,

A myriad hearts distrain no love from mine,—
My will alone fashions my destinies!
Why say'st thou, then, obedient? — God is God,
And Man is Man. — Why chains when all is free?

ADAM

Thy dark thought stumbles in impiety.
Art thou so blinded from enlightenment?
God rules! knowest thou not His secret laws
Thro' life and death dispose immutably
The minnow and Leviathan, the pale
Glow-worm and Gold Arcturus with his sons?
Child, we are dust once lifeless, soon to die,
Sentient and lonely creatures of his will
Cast in the mould of his divinity.

CAIN

Father! father! — What say'st thou? — Can it be
That we are creatures of an alien will,

The fashioned puppets of a craftsman's hands,
The structured dolls of God's imagining?
Creatures — How then? — is liberty a lie?
Are we so basely cheated and contemned? —
Then are we pitiful spectres of a dream;
Then is this azure overarch of heaven
Lifted on ghostly wings of phantasy;
Then is the day-spring's fire-flushed flood that pours
Up the star-shingled beaches of the sky
A bright delusion; then beneath the sun
Are void phantoms; then is life itself,
This passionate life, this imminent creation,
Mere vapor on the immeasurable heaven
Where dawns the eternal morning of the soul!
Nay! — since we are not men but slaves, and thus
Even the high task and ecstasy of love,
The austere endurance of great wrongs are vain,
And vain all tenderness and sacrifice
That swell the soul's horizons, — then the Soul

Itself is naught — a cause denies the Soul!
O father, seest thou not how much is lost? —
How by God's will all fades to nothingness?
What cause is needed why the splendid sun,
The delicate moon and all the faultless stars
Minister to the world delicious light?
What cause is needed why the crusted sod
Gives punctual utterance to so fragile flowers?
What cause is needed why within me stirs
The haughty power and longing of creation,
Or thought or spiritual serenity? —
What cause is needed, what is justified?
If cause there be then are we all betrayed,
Then may we well despair of life and death!

ADAM

I hear thy words — madness and blasphemy!
God pity me! — for I thought his justice slept,
His vengeance drowsed, with misery satiated.
I was the more deceived! — The poison works:
Thou art the child of Woman, the son of sin.

Thy crazed words witness: — Eve, thy womb
is cursed,
Hark to thy son!

EVE

In a low voice

Mine! Mine!

ADAM

Methinks I hear
That voice that said "Thou shalt be even
as is
Almighty God, knowing both Good and
Evil!"

EVE

— that voice of passionate poems and grave
joys —
Even so —

ADAM

— it spake as thou, my eldest son!

CAIN

What have I uttered more or less than truth?

Why are your words so strange, your eyes so
sad,
And sudden panic fallen upon your
thoughts? —
For love, for justice, simply, as I speak,
Deal with me! Judge me not, tho' igno-
rance
Cheats my impetuous soul: — are we not all
Like lonely voyagers on uncharted seas
Who signal each to each when thro' the gloom
Flashes a beacon, or a distant roar
Warns where some coast confronts the sombre
flood,
Perchance the haven of our guideless quest,
Perchance a peril and a sepulchre?
O you, forbear! — even tho', lost and blind,
I, from the sluggish rear of circumstance,
Signal a rushlight for a guiding star
To you who lead the intrepid van of hope,
Let not your hearts condemn me utterly!
Whatever leagues divide us man from man
Seem in the endless journey of the soul
So brief a distance! Rather, tenderly,

Lead me to stand one day where now you stand,
To glimpse the light that proves me wrong
to-day!

ADAM

The light is God! Within the soul there
dwells
Reflected splendour! — He, the Sun of Hea-
ven,
Gives light to all. The dream of liberty
Shadows the glass, where God's magnificence
Alone should glow, with darkness utterly.
When, from the sapphire pinnacles of heaven,
Spangled with stars, where sing to pleasure
Him
Grave angels and the clear-voiced Sons of
Song,
His eyes look forth, we seem as flickering
motes
Caught in the stream of his effulgence!

CAIN

Nay!
No height whence the supernal vision falls

Can shrink us to a less reality
Than what we are, being no less than men!

EVE

Spirit of Life! Thrilled Heart! — Nay,
words are vain! —
The worst shall come inevitably I know.
My heart is keen with direful prophecy —
Cain, Cain, my heart aches of your destinies!
Clasp me, dear son, in both your arms! — O
God!
What shall I say?

CAIN

I ask no eminence,
No power, no more than truth! — in very
deed
What less thing can a man desire than truth?

EVE

What more thing?

ADAM

Since the truth is God! —

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CAIN

The truth
Is mine and yours in measure of our will!

ABEL

Yours? — Mine? —

CAIN

How not, if there is truth at all?
The ways are barred to no adventurer,
The seas bear up whatever onward keel!

ABEL

Where? To what end? Lacking God's guidance, where
Shall stray such blind and errant enterprise?

CAIN

Haply thro' all sweet vistas and sublime
The ecstatic soul at last goes home to light!

ABEL

But you? —

CAIN

I walk level with what I am,
Negligent of a goal. My feet no less

Are stablished where they tread than spreads
my soul
Her irised wings and lifts her breast of faith
Against the eternal skies and shoreless seas,
The infinite, fresh, immortal, strange Beyond!
So poised, I may be master of no thing
That is at all and will be slave to none!
If God — you say — assume to tutor me,
How shall He ask a less thing than I crave
In native aspiration? Rather shall He
Lift up his light beyond the utmost stars
Fading along the verge of consciousness! —
Rather than bind me in obedience
He shall loose freedom from the parapets
Of heaven and spur my soul to range be-
yond! —
So, haply, after long discoveries,
To walk at last his comrade, hand in hand,
And share with Him the infinite vision of
truth!

ADAM

O mortal pride! O madness worse than sin! —
Pitiful child! Derisive, trifling worm

God's foot would crush didst thou deserve so much, —
Be silent! lest perchance thy noisy babble
Might vex his calm divinity! —

EVE

— Hush! —Hush! —
I know the worst must come — nothing avails,
For him my heart foretold catastrophe
When, as I watched last night beside his sleep,
His brows grew bent in great resolve, his lips
Muttered as tho' within his sightless eyes
Sate perilous visions or his soul endured
Strange visitation of fantastic dreams! —
Cain! — O my child, I love you utterly!
What urge compels you? What magnificence
Lifts in your life? What sense of combat swells
Your soul with truth, your heart with liberty?

CAIN

How shall I say? — within me all is flowing
And vague and boundless and unutterable.

Within me joy, heart-deep, heart-warm, and
love
And power of life are measureless; within
Light beats and swells!— I dwell within the
soul's
Rose-irised mist of everlasting wonder
Where life assails me with resistless love!
I share with all — and all results for me!
For me the day-spring and the dawn of moon,
For me the elate, innumerable stars,
For me strong seas, for me this earth of
graves —
O earth of tireless conception! — and
For me these plains and desolate mountain-
peaks,
This glad and faithful fellowship of life! —
These all, all are my passionate lovers! All
They seize my sense, they take their will of
me,
They task me with delicious ecstasies!
On towers of naked rock, in deep defiles,
Beneath the glitter of tree-leaves wet with
light,

By streams singing their journey thro' the world,
In rainfall, by the roar of distant seas
On beach and cliff, by cloud and cataract,
I feel a presence and a mystery,
A summons of incomparable love,
Great indications of eternity,
Miracles, vistas, portents, lifted veils,
Breathless discoveries and revelations,
The lure of open arms, tho' doors ajar,
Glimpses beyond, voices of grave surmise, —
These all I feel within me and around
Breathe of immortal secrets! — More, too deep,
Too delicate for words, heaves in my breast,
Burns in my sense and swells my soul with light!

EVE

O God, how all my wounded heart resounds! —
Hush, lest I yield! — No more! — No more! — thy words
Are wonderful and strange as happiness!

The gates spring wide asunder! — Hush! —
No more!
Thy dreams, God knows, were otherwise, —
thy dreams
Were gaunt with pride and prophecy and
pain! —

CAIN

Then were my dreams beyond my conscious
scope.
The spread of earth, the circling deeps of
heaven,
The interminable sea, resistless love,
The passion and miracle of life and death,
The immortal whispers from within the soul —
My knowledge finds horizon in these things.

ADAM

So far, so pitiably art thou strayed from truth,
Thou blind and boastful fool! learn this at
least:
The true horizon of the soul is God!
And thou, Eve, Woman, most perilously wan-
dered

In weak delusion, now I charge thee speak,
Lest thou should'st fall again in deathless sin,
Of God and man, — God's all, man's nothing-
ness!

EVE

Dear son, we are God's creatures every one —

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

I 'll speak no more! —

ABEL

Haply it is
That God inspires his handiwork and sets
The pulse of life in cadence with his heart.
Haply, dear Cain, the joy, the infinite love,
The fire and perfume of divinity,
The rapture of concealed infinities
Thy soul has garnered round thee and within,
Are but the harvest of his seed of grace
Sown broadcast over all his huge creation. —

CAIN

Then am I cheated of my heritage !
Then all 's a dream, a web of foolish lies !
Then is the faith that fills the fragile nest
And exquisitely brings frail flowers to bud
A pitiful derision ; then is life
A monstrous farce and death a fruitless pang ! —
Then are my manhood and my liberty,
My will, my thoughts, the life-sap of my loins,
The unborn sons and daughters of my blood
Vain hopes and pitiable deceptions, lies
Of sense and soul, — Aye ! then is God himself
The showman of a stupid mummery —

EVE

Cain ! — Cain ! — forbear !

CAIN

Hast thou forgot thy pangs
That prove this life was thine that now is mine ? —

Not God's life, thine and mine! — Yea! face
to face
And heart to heart, with deep and fearless eyes,
So it is mete that I should speak with God
Who speak with no thing on less perfect terms!
My life, my love, my cherished liberty,
Are mine because whatever is at all
Shares in their dispensation. — I will take
No joy but all participate, no pang
But all endure, no power, no attribute
But all possess or shall possess in turn! —
So is my right inviolable to stand
Where now I stand and ask my leave of
none! —

ADAM

Enough! — O God, be just yet merciful!
Witless he is and sinful — yet my son!
Punish his sin, yet I beseech thee stay
The full and righteous measure of thy
wrath! —
And thou — answer no more! — I 'll hear no
more!

Thou art my son, living in God's defiance,
To add a grief more grievous than the rest
To all the misery my harsh days must bear! —
And thou, whose weakness set the term to joy,
Thou, by whose sin the worst has come to pass,
Beware of what more dire events may chance!
And now — Go forth each one. The daylight lifts —
Somewhere your labour waits you in the world!

ACT II

GENESIS

CHAPTER IV

. . . . . .

3. And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. *And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;*

5. BUT UNTO CAIN AND TO HIS OFFERING HE HAD NOT RESPECT. AND CAIN WAS VERY WROTH, AND HIS COUNTENANCE FELL.

6. AND THE LORD SAID UNTO CAIN, WHY ART THOU WROTH? AND WHY IS THY COUNTENANCE FALLEN?

7. IF THOU DOEST WELL, SHALT THOU NOT BE ACCEPTED? AND IF THOU DOEST NOT WELL, SIN LIETH AT THE DOOR. . . .

8. AND CAIN TALKED WITH ABEL HIS BROTHER: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, THAT CAIN ROSE UP AGAINST ABEL HIS BROTHER, AND SLEW HIM.

A broad level of naked rock at the extreme summit of a high mountain. No vegetation nor any sign of life whatever. At the back the mountain falls away in a sheer precipice. In the immense distance below and beyond stretches a vast panorama of forest, field and stream, warm and tranquil thro' the golden haze of late afternoon. In the foreground is a low platform of stone about twenty feet square with three broad stone steps leading up to it. On the platform stands a sort of sacrificial stone or table of offerings. The splendid light of the low sun inundates the summit of the mountain and lies, windless and warm, across the altar.

Time: late afternoon of the same day which dawned in Act I.

CAIN enters by a path ascending from the valley. He bears in his hands fruit, grain, and two small jars containing oil and wine. He places his burden on the ground near the raised platform, and, seating himself on a boulder, surveys the immense prospect spread beneath him.

I am gone sky-ward to the uttermost —
Tacit and distant as life's thought of death
Earth lies beneath me patterned with sheer
hills,
Deserts and forest-marches, flashing streams
And sea-scapes vast beyond the power of
vision.
Its charted levels, whelmed beneath the dumb
Cycles and tides of lucent sapphire, seem
A sea-floor tufted with gigantic weeds,
Virgin of tumult or the tread and travel
Of restless feet; yet fruitful streams, I know,
Go seaward voiced with endless melody,
Twilight is plaintive with the cries of birds,
Dim forests murmur soft as sleep, and all
The myriads of life are musical!
No whisper lifts, — the light is deep and
dumb.

As one sequestered in the tower of thought
I stand aloof from restless strife and sound,
Withdrawn beyond the fellowship of life. —
Solitude, silence and tranquillity,
Immensity of elemental things, —
Haply in you at last the soul finds room,
And liberty and light haply in you!
It may be, — aging with the passionate seasons
On earth's maternal breast, — that life becomes
Too much a lyric enterprise, too wrought
With dreams and great desires and deep surmise,
Too dazed with motion and magnificence. —
There, in the press and pride and longing of life,
Haply the captive soul is leashed and lulled; —
Yet whiles, even in the ruck of the swift hours,
Sentient of twilights and infinities! —
But here is refuge: silence, unperturbed,
Broods on these battlements of lifeless stone
Reared like an isle from life's tempestuous sea.
Regioned in light and loneliness, the soul

May, in the all-reflecting glass of truth,
Confront with eyes insatiable of light
The revelations of eternity. —
Here might at last divinely be fulfilled
All spiritual indications to the soul
From rapt communion with the silent stars,
That still by night their endless vigil keep
On the vague frontiers of infinity.
Here might the thought of time, the thought
of death,
The wonder and desire of deathless things
Yield to the soul their last significance. —
Here might the mystery of God be solved! —

He pauses, staring before him over the immense prospect where the light deepens.

I know at last all shall be lived, endured —
All shall at last find mansions in the soul; —
And then — then shall the soul be satisfied?
O restless voyager, where is thy rest?
Is there a haven for thine enterprise,
A goal for thine adventure and a term
For thine infinity? —Imagination,

Daring the intervals of pathless gloom
From star to star of thought, falls broken-winged! —
Yet are the days of life occasional
Of truth's divine discovery, — and soul
Shall at the last accept no less than truth!

A pause. CAIN gazes before him, lost in thought. Then, ascending from below, the voice of Abel is heard singing.

The voice of ABEL

Lord God, my light, my hope, my faith,
Craftsman of earth and sea and sky,
What power but Thine can justify
The ways of life, the pangs of death?

Resistless God! before Thy face
My spirit bows, I feel Thy will!
My heart is meek — O Lord, fulfill
My life with Thine exhaustless grace!

I put no trust in strength or youth,
Or power, or thought, or mighty deeds;

I ask of life no more than needs ;
I know but this — Thy will is Truth !

Thy creature needs Thy love and light,
Thy servant bows before Thy rod ; —
O guide my steps, Eternal God,
And make me perfect in Thy sight !

ABEL, bearing in his arms a lamb, enters and appears face to face with CAIN.

CAIN

— Abel — Abel —

ABEL

Cain —

CAIN

Abel — alone —
So far —

ABEL

My feet have striven to this sheer height
Led by the luminous spirit of piety ;
I bear the innocent firstling of my flocks

Here to God's altar as a thanksgiving
Of all my heart for his beneficence!
My mood perchance is thine: creation stirs
To new conception; earth's reviving green
Moves the meek heart to praise the Lord of
Life
With songs and seasonable sacrifice.

CAIN

Thy mood is alien to my thoughts of God
And all my visions of human destiny.
I bring no tribute —

ABEL

Nay! — a eucharist!
Is it not very spacious and most fair
This parcel of God's potent handiwork
Held by the sons of man in heritage?
Is it not generous of all pleasantness
And fruitful for the hunger of life's days?
Then, to the Heavenly Artisan who severed
Darkness from light, shaped systems from the
void,

Wafted the breath of life thro' lifeless clay, —
How else to Him can man glance heaven-
ward
Save with mild eyes of adoration? How
Climb to his footstool save in grateful praise?

CAIN

God knows no gratitude of mine shall fail
Where such is due. God knows when face to
face
I meet my creditor, no debt he proves
Shall wait for payment. Now, till then, I stand
Fettered by no more than my bounds of
thought,
Slave to such fears and passions as obscure
Soul's truth and chill the headlong heart of
faith, —
Yet, in conception, strong, supreme, and free!

ABEL

Why has this violence of self, this stern
Defiance diseased thy soul with doubt and
pride?

The days of life bring one by one their treasure
Of simple toil and simple happiness —
Desires, right deeds, endurance, joy and pain, —
With over all the shelter of God's wise will!
Forego thy search: God is a mystery. —
Now, while the last light lingers heavenward,
Let me fulfill my sacrifice: my soul
Lies on God's breast, — my trust is all in Him.

ABEL ascends the steps to the raised platform, still carrying the lamb in his arms. He sets the lamb down and heaps some fuel on the sacrificial stone. Then he stands before it facing the deep light of sunset.

CAIN
to himself as he watches Abel

His face is young and tranquil as a child's:
All seems surpassing well with him, — his eyes
Shine with calm rapture, innocent of thought.
Meek trust, simplicity and tenderness —

I must believe his soul is satisfied,—
Filled with a crust!—and I who starve, who
starve!—
O tireless voyager! O soul of me!
Captain, my soul!—shall we not better rest?
See, where a mansion in the House of Life
Waits our repentance, and a candle burns
Still thro' the casement—yea, tho' faint and
far,
The firelight of contentment lures us back!—
Shall we not better pause, return,—forget
Our desperate quest beyond the heedless stars?
Shall we not better live forevermore
Passionless by the threshold, lulled in sleep,
Like children sheltered in the Father-house?

ABEL

—The golden sandals of reluctant day
Climb the broad shoulders of the heavenward
hills.
Earth fills with darkness like a shallow bowl
And sleep weighs down the weary lids of life.
O peace of God, vigil of God's great love,

I feel you now, in vast serenity,
Brood like a benediction on the world!

CAIN

still to himself

— No more the ecstasy and the pangs of thought,
No more the tempest's threat, the perilous plunge
And shoreless vision of blind uncharted seas
Where soul must wander years and lives and æons
Seeking the undiscoverable truth! —
Captain, my soul, — shall we not better rest?

ABEL strikes fire and lights the fuel upon the altar. He throws on the flames myrrh and frankincense; a dense smoke arises. Then he raises the lamb in his arms and at the same moment draws a knife from his belt.

ABEL

Being whose thoughts are destiny: whose power

Chains the rebellious, tames the passionate;
Whose justice spares the suppliant soul and damns
The soul of pride, — Almighty God, to Thee
Ascend my pæan and prayer and thanksgiving!
Father of Life, accept thy creature; Lord,
Master, receive thy faithful servant Abel!
I ask with contrite heart and will subdued
The dispensation of thy charity!
Suffer this fire and incense may be blessed;
This living sacrifice be sanctified
With thine acceptance!

ABEL cuts the throat of the lamb and lets the warm blood pour out on the sacrificial stone.

I beseech Thee guard
My frailty, fill my heart with thy desire,
Fashion my will to thine intention, take
Temptation from me of my mortal strength,
And pride of thought, — my hope is all in Thee!

ABEL falls on his knees beside the altar and remains lost in rapture. CAIN springs to his feet.

CAIN

Shine! Shine! passionate light of Liberty!
Blow! outward winds; lift the wide wings of thought
Reckless and blind against the night! and you,
Monotonous thunder of the shoreless seas,
Sound thro' long vistas to the sleepless soul!
Rouse, heart benumbed, the lethargy is passed!
Spirit dismayed, the spell is shattered, wake!
Athlete of Freedom, rend the silken fetters
That well-nigh bound thy nerveless sinews fast!
O Heart, how near we stooped to infamy!—
Now and forever the supreme choice is made,
The die is cast! Never shall I behold,
Turning a backward glance from truth's endeavour,
The firelight of content, the lamp of fear
Flickering behind the clouded panes of thought,
The guarded threshold of the House of Sleep!
Forward I set my steadfast eyes! Haste! haste!

Captain, my soul! we shall return no more!
Cut the last strands of weakness and despair
That bound our vessel to the shores of safety!
I hear the singing of all the spacious seas
Of truth's supreme adventure and at last
Take the deep vistas with a homeless eye!

CAIN advances rapidly, seizes the grain, wine, and oil which he had deposited on the ground, and mounts the steps to the platform. There he pauses a moment, looking down upon ABEL, who is still on his knees in a sort of quiet ecstasy.

Man! and so abject! yet my heart is love —
So young he seems, so tender like a child!
Abel!

ABEL

Who calls me?

CAIN

Rise! for I am Cain,
First of the Sons of Man!

ABEL

O rouse me not!
God's peace enfolds me —

CAIN

Rise!

ABEL

What is thy will?

ABEL rises to his feet still a little dazed by the rapture of his meditations.

CAIN

Knowest thou me?

ABEL

Why are thine eyes so strange?

CAIN

Knowest thou me?

ABEL

Thou art my brother Cain —

CAIN

First of the sons of man!

ABEL

What is thy will?

CAIN

Abel, as we are men, I love thee!

ABEL

Cain,

As God is Love, I love thee.

CAIN

All my will

Is thy redemption —

ABEL

My redemption?

CAIN

Man!

I will redeem thee from thine abject state,
Strike the vile fetters from thy fearful feet,
And set thee in the path of liberty!

ABEL

Liberty? —

CAIN

I have lifted the large light,
Near to destruction; it shall shine as fire
Flashing by night, and there where nothing was

Save darkness where imagined spectres stalked,
Visions of God and man's divinity,
Grown to perfection thro' ascending lives,
Shall smite thy breathless soul with wonder!—

ABEL

Cain!

CAIN

Liberty!— See!— God stands before thee now
Real and majestic! Thou shalt understand
How much thy cowardice has wronged him; Man,
Thou hast defiled his name! Thy prayers invoke
Some wrathful demon, not the Soul of Light!
Repent thy prayers, thy prayers were blasphemy!

ABEL

Cain!

CAIN

Hear me—

ABEL

Blasphemy?

CAIN

God is not Lord
Of slaves nor tyrant pleased with abject fears,
Pæans and sacrifice: God sheds his grace
And shares his fellowship for men, not slaves!
Men who are sinewed with sublime resolve,
Whom perfect faith has made insatiable,
Whose eyes pursue, star over star, the last
Outpost of knowledge in the skies of thought!
Pilgrims of pathless lands, whom neither walls
Nor slumber nor the arms of love can hold;
Mariners who depart on shoreless seas
Avid of new horizons in the vast
Unknown!— O men, homeless and lonely men,
For you, for you the fellowship of God!

ABEL

Thine is the blasphemy! Beware! The Lord
Hath said, "Vengeance is mine!"

CAIN

Thy words are wild.—
Vengeance? why vengeance? Shall I dare to fear
The Truth?—O man! are we not torch-bearers?

ABEL

Beware! we are but men and God is God!

CAIN

What then? Divinity is here, not there!
O Soul, God is not otherwise than thou.
And thou art God, O soul, spirit divine!
Words that defile nor body nor soul of me
Defile not God! He is what I shall be,
I am what he has been! Hours, days, years,
Centuries, cycles, æons, — I shall pass
At last to where he waits and longs for me!

CAIN strides to the altar and pours on the failing fire his oil and wine. At once the fire flames brightly and a dense column of smoke mounts straight into the windless air. Then CAIN scatters his grain upon the altar. Meanwhile ABEL, dazed and scared, shrinks farther and farther away toward the steps.

CAIN

To You, Spirit Divine! O Soul of Life,
Denizen of this tenement! O God,

Captain of life's adventure, Self and Soul,
Immortal Master of this mortal house! —
To You, for moments of eternity;
To You, for Truth's sublime discoveries;
To You, for revelations still to come,
Visions unseen, unknown infinities, —
To You this invocation and to You
This ecstasy and solemn sacrifice!

CAIN stands, transported with rapture, his face lifted and flushed with the firelight. Suddenly darkness falls, thunder peals, there comes a violent gust of wind, and the column of smoke from CAIN'S sacrifice is bent and blown straight back in his face. He recoils a step.

The Voice of GOD

REJECTED!

ABEL shrieks and stumbles backward down the steps of the platform. At the bottom he falls on his knees and bows his head to the ground.

ABEL

Grace! — Forgiveness! — Mercy! — Mercy!

CAIN

Give me breath! — I am stunned! —

The Voice of GOD

REJECTED!

ABEL

God! O God!
My God! — be merciful! be merciful!

CAIN

Who cries "Rejected!"?

ABEL

God!

The Voice of GOD

REJECTED!

CAIN

Speak! —
Answer! — Who dares reject the soul of Cain?
I am the Son of Man — who dares reject me?

ABEL

Cain — Cain!

CAIN

Who dares reject me?

The Voice of GOD

I am God! —
Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?
If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?
And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door!

Immediately the wind falls, the sudden darkness lifts, disclosing ABEL prostrate on the ground at the foot of the steps leading to the platform, and CAIN standing, erect and menacing, by the sacrificial stone. Below, the immense panorama of the earth is covered with the shadows of early night. The fire on the altar is extinguished and the scene is illumined only by the last dark flush of sunset which still lingers on the summit of the mountain. The deep violet of the skies is spangled with ripe stars. The silence and the stillness are unbroken.

CAIN

God's voice! — Rejected! — Cain, the Son of Man,

Rejected! — Man, rejected and man's soul
Utterly lost from God's acceptance! — Then —
Hope whored with Fancy and begot a —
dream!
So was my soul deceived! — Rejected! — Hear
me,
Infinite, voiceless, elemental airs,
Pathless, inviolable firmament!
Hear me, ethereal solitudes, untrod
Save by the bare and soundless feet of light!
Hear me, O cosmic fellowship of stars,
Stainless as children's eyes; majestic suns
And far-flung systems of coherent orbs!
Hear me, O sun, creative lord of light!
Hear me, O moon, mistress of chaunting tides!
Hear me, dead snows of desolate mountain-
peaks,
Robing the tragic shapes of cliff and crag!
Hear me, resistless sea and fruitful earth,
Theatre of life and death! — O earth and sea
Of graves and resurrections, toil and sleep! —
Hear me, O Heart, O passionate Heart of
Life! —

Hear me, Immortal Heart! And hear me, you,
All in whose veins the pulse of life abounds!
And you, Abel! Abel! — O Son of Man,
Hear me! Hear me! Hear me! — now and forever
I make you witness to this monstrous deed —
God has rejected Cain, the Son of Man!

ABEL

God of stern justice and resistless wrath!

CAIN

Justice? — No justice moves this fierce revenge!

ABEL

God's will is justice! — Desperate rebel, yield!
Hast thou not suffered of all thy sinful pride?
Shall not the power of God constrain thy heart?
Measure thy peril, — be contrite or despair!

CAIN

Never! I will not yield nor yet despair!
Must we despair? — Respond, rejected Soul! —

Faith cheated, love deceived, fond hopes betrayed,
By God denied — must we despair? Respond!
Where's justice?—light?—refuge?—Thought reels! The rod
Strikes fire from flint — beneath the blows of wrath
Fierce doubts and perilous questions leap like sparks,
Flashing within me! Reckless Soul, respond!
Who is the God who dares reject me? Who
Art thou, Spirit Divine?

ABEL

Repent! Repent!
Lest worse befall thee!

CAIN

God rejects me! — Now,
As one who falls in fight and then at dawn
Wakes on the stricken field as life returns
Spent and delirious from the peril of death,

And so, nerved with faint hope, numbers his wounds, —
So I, from fear and dire amazement roused,
Question my peril and count my injuries:
How have I suffered? Where have I suffered? — Speak!
Body and soul seem scatheless — life remains —
Where are my wounds? — I feel them not! My strength
Is whole! Where are my wounds? Where are my wounds? —
I swear, I swear nothing is lost! — All 's well!
Captain, my soul, despair is not for thee!
Thou shalt behold the seals of darkness lift,
Weather the wrathful tempest and at last,
Resolute, onward, headlong, dazed and scarred,
Reel thro' the gates of Truth's enormous dawn!

ABEL

Madman! Beware! — Thy hope is weaved of dreams;
Damnable dreams to cheat the will of God;
Pitiful dreams, proud dreams, fantastic lies! —

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL

Repent! — if still repentance serves,
Repent! — the mercy of God is infinite
To all who bring his favoured sacrifice —
A contrite, humble and obedient heart!

CAIN

Truth, not forgiveness, I demand of God,
Justice, not mercy, love, not charity! —
I was not fashioned to bewail my sins,
I was not born for safe obedience! —
I bring not peace among you but a sword!

ABEL

Cain — for thy life's sake, Cain, repent!

CAIN

No more! —
Silence! — Ask me no more! — I feel at last
The breath of light, frail and portentous! —
Wake!
It dawns, rejected Soul! — The secret yields!

I have been stunned! And now — Light! —
Now, suddenly
Shadows shall fade, veils lift — I shall discover
One of the meanings! — Now — at last, at last,
I understand! — Creation — Paradise —
The immortal fruit — Mother, thy gorgeous deed! —
O revelations! O discoveries!
Measureless light at last! The truth at last!
Enlightenment! — All 's well! The sacred fire
Of liberty still burns! — Man is redeemed!

ABEL

Lost! Lost! Utterly lost, body and soul!
Accursed! Accursed!

CAIN

Now God's dominion ends! —

ABEL

Accursed! Accursed!

CAIN

Now man's abasement ends!

For now the power and wrath and terrour of God
Fade like false phantoms in the light, — the light!
God is dethroned and man resumes the crown,
Regains the sceptre of divinity!

ABEL

Pitiful madman! —

CAIN

Peace! — despair and fear
Are ghosts that haunt the night of ignorance;
Dwellers in darkness of the immense unknown;
Phantoms that lurk where thought's horizons blurr,
Where the vague shores of knowledge quake to feel
Tumult and thunder of the seas beyond!

ABEL

Merciful God, pity him — he is mad!
Pity and spare him!

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CAIN

CAIN

Peace! — God's power is lost!
The ghastly tyranny of fear no more
Shall bind the spirit of man in servitude!
How can our faith be less than perfect now?
All that awaits us shall be well, as all
That is and has been is surpassing well!
Measure thy scope and grasp thy heritage,
Captain, my Soul! — Perchance not God alone
Shall fade and vanish as the large light expands.
It may be, haply, that at last in thine
Infinite waking life itself shall prove
A passionate dream and death a tranquil sleep!

ABEL

Silence, distracted soul! — Can God condone
When I condemn thee as I must? Thou sayest
Such frantic words of peril and deadly sin
As no conception of my brain can grasp
Nor all my love forgive! —

CAIN

O man, rejoice!

Now thou shalt understand — at last, at last,
All shall be clear and stedfast in thy soul.
Purge from thy brain the sickness of strange fears:
My cause is pregnant of new liberties:
Hear me in peace and be my justicer. —
How I have thought ineffably of God
And stretched the vistas of all my hopes to him,
God knows and thy remembrance certifies.
Much I believed that Truth's immortal seed,
Lost or unfruitful in the soul of man,
Was, in the spirit of God, by love and light,
Brought to its perfect flower — infinity.
God was to me a star of quenchless rays
Guiding my soul thro' time from life to life,
Training my vision to glimpse eternity! —
God was to me the breast where all may weep,
The eyes where all may find the immortal light,
The hand that all may clasp, the heart of hearts,
The spirit of passionate faith and liberty, —
The tenant of the heavenly father-house,

Waiting with arms of welcome wide for all! —
Such were my visions, such were my thoughts
of God —
Yet God rejects me! See! the monstrous
deed
Aches for interpretation. What is God,
God who rejects so pure an ecstasy?
Witness! — the crucial secret must be solved!
Spirit finds answer — thou shalt hear and
learn,
Partner in man's inheritance with man.
God who rejects me and betrays my hope;
God who denies me and deceives my faith,
Cheats my desire and scorns my exalted love;
God, who with peace and pleasure and loveli-
ness,
Fashioned the marvellous gardens of Paradise,
Sating man's senses to debauch his soul;
God, whose despair, — when Eve, with sacred
thirst,
Gathered and shared the fruit whereof all men
Must eat who seek the soul's enlighten-
ment, —

Drew from his lips the cry: "Behold the man
Is even as God, knowing both good and evil!"
God, who in passion and fear and frenzy smote
Man's disobedience and his dignity;
God, who would hold the heart enslaved with fear,
Stifle the sacred fire with ignorance,
Leash the proud soul with duty and content,
Obedience and remorseful cowardice, —
God is not liberty but law, not love
But mercy, not redemption but despair;
Not joy but lethargy and meek content,
Not grief's robust acknowledgement of wrong
But abject lamentation and remorse,
Not justice but forgiveness or revenge,
Not strength but safety, not the change of growth,
Fluid unrest of free development,
But rules and customs and establishments,
Limits and lies — the servitude of man!
So even is God and God's significance!

But Lo! at last man wakes and stands and strives!
Liberty! — Light! — Thy deed was not in vain,
Mother! Thy womb has not engendered slaves!

ABEL, still on his knees, has listened to CAIN with steadily growing terrour. By this time his fear and amazement, his conviction of Cain's utter lunacy, have become, as it were, a shield which neither the shafts of persuasion nor reason nor truth can penetrate. He is, in a word, panic-stricken. Staring at CAIN, he backs away from him on his knees.

ABEL

almost in a whisper

Blasphemy!

CAIN

By the breast that gave thee suck,
Abel, my brother, I adjure thee rise!
Rise and rejoice! I bring thee liberty;
For truth is liberty and nought but truth!

Never again thy knees shall cringe ; thy heart
Never again shall feel the fear of God !
Body and Soul are real and perfect — rise !

ABEL

as before

Blasphemy !

CAIN

Lo ! men are we — Gods in germ !
The earth is real, stedfast beneath our feet,
The spacious vision of light is in our eyes,
And over us the dark void is fathomless.
Under the skies' pavilion, gemmed with stars,
On earth's exhaustless breast the flesh can feel
The chill and challenge and mystic hush of dawn,
The careless largess of the luminous days,
The vast of night, the fragrant shadows of sleep,
The task, the triumph, the constant truth of life,
And death's eventual tranquillity ! —
Yea, even when flesh dissolves in final change

Still may it feel the growth of flowers and still
Serve the insatiable desire of life!
While Soul with passionless and immortal
eyes,
Sleepless and strained to glimpse eternity,
Thro' endless time, ascending avatars,
Keeps way and vista to the throne of God
And thence beyond to new infinities! —
Finding no goal it shall not reach and pass
And no supremacy it may not share!
Rise! rise! — Ours is the choice, be ours the
will!
Body and soul we cannot be denied!

ABEL

as before

So spake the serpent in the golden glades,
So spake the Demon in the ears of Eve —
Blasphemy! —

To CAIN

Ask me no more! I 'll hear no more!

CAIN

Abel! —

ABEL

Be still, lest God should strike thee dumb!

CAIN

Abel! —

ABEL

Silence! No more! My heart is sick,
My brain withers! — O God! — Delirious fool,
Dost thou not know that should my soul forget
The fear, the power, the sovereignty of God,
Then would the mercy of God, the might of God
Shelter and guide and comfort me no more?

CAIN

Abel! — art thou so blind, so abject? Man,
Truth is thy guide, thy light is liberty!
What need of shelter where no harm impends?
What need of comfort where no fears assail?
Safety alone is perilous and fear
Only is fearful!

ABEL

— So was Eve destroyed!

CAIN

It cannot be thou art so pitiable —
It cannot be!

ABEL

— So was perfection lost!

CAIN

It cannot be! — Wake from thy trance! the flood
Of light shall whelm thee suddenly; Truth shall rise,
Strange as a distant land-fall made at dawn,
Pure and transcendent in thy darkened ken!
Where's the disaster, where's the ruinous loss,
The peril thy scared imagination fears?
Speak!

ABEL

Art thou mad? If God's protection fails
Where is security and rest and peace?
Lacking God's grace what more is left for man

Than misery, want, alarm, and loneliness?
Always the outcast from the favour of God
Must feel the agony of a ceaseless dread
Of life and death consume his happiness.
I shudder in the mere thought!

CAIN

It cannot be!
Turn from thy cowardice and childish fears! —
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it;
But whosoever shall lose his life for truth
And liberty, the same shall save his life!
What shall it profit thee if thy life is gained
And all the splendour of all the world beside
If soul is lost? What shall it profit thee
To live sheltered in comfort and content,
If thou must yield the soul's inheritance
To alien government and forego thy crown,
Forfeit thy power and pawn thy liberty?
Nothing without can harm or comfort thee;
Peril and joy come only from within!
Thine is the venture! — seek and thou shalt find,
Clasped in the soul's horizons, life and death,

Divinity and power and destiny;
For in thyself superb attainment lies,
Fair in the paths of hope, the range of faith!
Thou art the way, thou art the wayfarer,
Thou art the guide, the goal, the pilgrimage!
Seeking and finding in itself alone,
Thy soul must bear the labour and tears of life,
And feel the passion and gain the glory of love,
And find the eternal thought, the perfect faith,
The courage of truth's unconquerable hope!
All that we know to-day is ours to-day,
And all unknown to-morrow shall be ours!

ABEL

Better that I should leave thee! I can bear
No more! My brain shudders to hear thee speak,
As God shakes in his wrath, knowing thy soul!
Better that I should leave thee — veil on veil,
Darkness is fallen between us utterly:
Now are we strangers who were joined in love!

Better that I should leave thee! — Go thy ways;
Gather the harvest that thy sins have sown! —
I can endure no more!

CAIN

A heart so tame,
A brain so chilled with fear, such vile disgrace,
Sorts with the bastard of a soulless slave,
Not with an offspring from the womb of Eve! —
O man! — Abel! —

ABEL

I 'll hear no more —

He turns away.

CAIN

The truth
Shines like a watch-fire and thou wilt not see;
Sounds like a clarion and thou wilt not hear!
Why art thou deaf and blind?

ABEL

I 'll stay no more! —

He takes a step as tho' to depart.

CAIN

What, must I teach at last these lips of mine
Kissed by thy lips so oft, to call thee slave,
Coward and traitor? — Child of Eve's rebellion,
Abel, art thou a man? —

ABEL

turning upon him fiercely

A man I am,
Of God's creation and the child of God!
Much have I heard thy madness rave and rant,
Long have I borne thy blasphemies, — but now,
Better that I should leave thee!

He turns resolutely to depart.

CAIN

Abel! Abel!
Abel! — Thou wearest the semblance of a man, —
The speech, the form, the function! — Leave me? — Thou? —

Knowest thou me? —I am thy brother, Cain!
How canst thou leave me? — Paradise was lost
That we might live and reap the harvest of life!
How canst thou leave me while the selfsame blood
Throbs in our hearts and thrills our limbs with strength?
Are we not men together, you and I?—
Are we not men? —

ABEL

As God is God! — Farewell!

Again ABEL takes a step to depart.

CAIN

Abel!

ABEL pursues his way without turning or answering CAIN'S desperate cry.

CAIN

Must I believe? In bitter truth
Art thou so vile, so abject? — Then, farewell!

Leave me! my heart is sick to know thy shame!
Leave me! — my soul abhors thine infamy!
Leave me!

CAIN covers his face with his hands.

ABEL

Farewell!

ABEL moves away. CAIN takes his hands from his eyes and stands, stirless, watching him depart. His face is haggard.

CAIN

Weep, for a soul is lost!
Weep, for a heart betrays its human trust!
Weep, for a traitor's shame! The Son of Man,
Who, in the days to come, shall haply be
Himself a Father of Men, has turned from truth!

Suddenly CAIN'S face changes as a new thought takes possession of him.

Himself a father — then —
CAIN, transfigured, overwhelmed by his thought,

leaps forward and seizes ABEL violently by the arm.

Thou canst not go!
Thou canst not go! Thy soul must see the truth —
Or —

His speech stops suddenly. His eyes stare as tho' confronting a dreadful prospect.

ABEL

Cain! — Release me!

CAIN

Nay, thou canst not go!
This hour is more momentous than I dreamed!
Man, I forgot that not thy paltry fate
Nor mine alone must find decision now!
Man, what of thy children, what of them?
Thou shalt be sire of daughters and strong sons,
Passionate men and women! — Abel! Abel!
Turn to the ways of light lest they shall be
Beggared of all but servitude and shame!

ABEL

Madman! Release me! — Let me pass!

CAIN

Be still,
Coward, be still! The scales of judgment bear
A freight more precious than all thy dreams have guessed!
Fool! dost thou think that were 't thyself alone
Standing in jeopardy, I should not now
Watch thy desertion in a silent scorn,
Choked with the horrour of thy great cowardice?
Yea, and how gladly! were my heart assured,
Losing thee, to forget my love for thee! —
Man, how I loved thee! — but no more of this —
Heart breaks, yet life constrains our service still,
And mine is still to say — Thou canst not go!

ABEL

If reason is still existent in thy brain,
Give me the cause of this extremity!

CAIN

The cause is grave beyond thy power of thought
And holds dominion both for thee and me,
Who share the selfsame trust and equally
Safeguard the sacred heritage of life.
We are not merely men but more than men
Since we are pregnant of futurity.
We are not measured by the fretful years
That span our being, since we store the seed
Of myriad generations yet unborn.
We are the start of young humanities!
We are the spring and freshet of mighty streams,
That thro' the reach of the unending years,
As thro' vast fields where darkness wars with dawn,
Shall keep their fruitful and resistless way!
We have within us such an utterance
As once proclaimed shall peal forevermore,
Echoed and multiplied from age to age,
Down thro' the endless labyrinth of time!
We are the scabbard of a sword of flame,

We are the wardens of the House of Life,
We are the guardians of a sacred fire,
We are the gates of Dawn,— the First of Men!
Such is the cause! — for this we shall not yield
The torch of freedom to the winds of fear,
Nor blight the burgeon from the seed of truth
With frost of lies or dust of ignorance!
Nay, we must shield the torch and guard the flower;
We must be perfect in our sacred trust;
We must preserve, in strength and faith and love,
Our whole inheritance that all may share! —
Not for the safety of a mean content,
Not in the terrour of a wrathful God,
Shall we renounce the treasure and the task,
Or sell the birthright of the Sons of Man!

ABEL

Thy cause compels not me! I know full well
There shall be shelter upon the breast of God
Thro' all of time, for all the Sons of Men
Who live obedient to His perfect will!

CAIN

There shall be chains for slaves and whips for curs, —
But we! — Are we not men? — express and whole
In all the power and faculty of being?
Are we not deathless souls? —

ABEL

Release me!

CAIN

Never!
Never shall I release thee till my hand
Shatters the shuttered windows of thy soul,
And shows thee, tawdry in the great light of truth,
This tinsel majesty, this powerless ghost,
This mouthing masque thy fears have hailed as God!

ABEL

Devil! — Release me!

CAIN

Abel —

ABEL

No, by Heaven,
I will not pander to thy lunacy!

CAIN

Abel, compel me not! I am a man
Driven by desperate emergencies!
Never, I swear, shalt thou betray thy trust!
Nay, thou must here fulfill thy sacred charge,
Shatter thy bondage, cleanse thy soul of lies,
Nor evermore, diseased with cowardice,
Go forth to life! —

CAIN is suddenly silent. His eyes are caught by the knife which ABEL had used to sacrifice the lamb and which now lies on the platform where he let it fall. CAIN stares at it in a kind of horrible fascination. ABEL, startled by the sudden break in CAIN'S speech, glances up at his face and then follows his eyes. ABEL sees the knife; he sees CAIN'S expression. At once his face is transfigured with terrour. Silently and desperately he struggles to escape.

CAIN holds him without removing his eyes from the knife.

ABEL

O God, protect me! God,
My God, protect me! O my God! —

CAIN

Be still! —

He turns to ABEL and cries out in a terrible voice.

ABEL!

ABEL

O God! —

CAIN

as before

ABEL!

ABEL

Merciful God,
As I have served Thee in humility,
Guard and protect me!

CAIN
as before

ABEL!

Changing to a tone of desperate entreaty.

Not for thee,
For me 't is fit to make beseeching prayers! —
Pity me! Spare me! Man, be true to men!
Spare me this deed! — Spare me! — I cannot
choose!

ABEL

Save me, Almighty God! Transcendent God,
Save me, thy servant, Abel!

CAIN

Must it be? —
O generations of my seed unborn,
Children of my conception, Sons of Man!
Now for your sakes I tear my heart in twain,
Ravage the confines of my life and hurl
Down from my shattered heavens the light of
joy!
Yours is this sacrifice, — for you, for you,

For your salvation, for the Soul of Man! —
Abel — I love thee with a perfect love!

ABEL

Devil! Release me! — O my God! My God! —

CAIN

So young he is! — So young! — O bleeding heart!
Man can do nothing more for man than this!

He puts forth his hand swiftly and grasps the knife. He shudders.

How can I do this deed?

ABEL

Almighty God,
Thy slave implores thee! — Save me! Save me! —

CAIN drives the knife deep into ABEL'S heart.

CAIN!

The knife drops from CAIN'S hand. He stares at the body of ABEL. His face is haggard.

CAIN

He is dead! —
I have killed the man I loved, my brother,
Abel!

Instantly the scene is plunged in total darkness. A tremendous storm rages. Thro' the thunder of the elements is heard the voice of GOD, pealing like a bell.

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?
Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?
Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

A flash of lightning reveals CAIN still standing on the platform with ABEL'S body in his arms, heedless of the elements.

ACT III

CHAPTER IV

9. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10. And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11. *And now art thou cursed from the earth*, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; *a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

13. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14. *Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid;* AND I SHALL BE A FUGITIVE AND A VAGABOND IN THE EARTH; AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT EVERY ONE THAT FINDETH ME SHALL SLAY ME.

15. And the LORD said unto him, THEREFORE

WHOSOEVER SLAYETH CAIN, VENGEANCE SHALL BE TAKEN ON HIM SEVENFOLD. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

. . . . . .

25. And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.

The same scene as in Act I.

Night: a few hours after the close of Act II. The sky is overcast. In the distance are heard from time to time rumours of storm.

EVE appears at the door of the tent. She pauses, listening intently.

Silence.—High in the sunless, starless, changeless,
Infinite void and naked visions of sleep,
Treble and clear as chimes, a far voice called:
"Bereavement!"—

Again she listens intently.

Silence.—The hours with noiseless feet,
Vacant and solitary and passionless,
Have found me vigilant of the voiceless night.
My heart has heard the heart of silence beat;
Mine eyes have stared into the dense, dead dark
Desolate visions of calamity
And glimpsed the lurking demon of despair,
While in my veins the violent life-blood beat
Like muffled thunder!—

Again she listens.

Silence—and no light—

Nothing — O Lord, how long? — Where are
my sons?
Where are my children? — Abel! — Cain! —
My sons!

Again she listens.

Silence — My heart will break! My heart will
break!

The voice of CAIN
from without

Mother!

EVE

At last!

The voice of CAIN

Mother!

EVE

The voice of Cain! —
Cain! Is it thou?

CAIN
entering

Mother!

CAIN is wild and tragic. EVE stares at him, startled and anxious.

EVE

What ails thee, child? —
Speak, dear one, speak!

CAIN

Mother!

EVE

My darling, come!
Lie on my breast — I love thee, love thee —
Come! —
Weep if thou must — the tears will ease thy pain.
Come to me, come!

CAIN remains stirless, silent, haggard.

Cain! — Child — What ails thee? — Speak!
Thy face is scared and tragic as my heart —
Why art thou strange? What is thy message? — Speak! —
If irremediable calamity
Smites me once more, if fate is pitiless,

Still let me know the worst! — it can be never
More dire an agony than this suspense!

CAIN

Mother!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

EVE starts back, panic-stricken. CAIN remains as before.

EVE

His voice! — His voice! — Gardens of Paradise! —
Midnight of desolation! — Wild despair! —
Dear God, I thought forgetfulness was earned!
But now the mountain, builded from the dust
Of all the lonely and lamentable years,
Quakes, and the crater's mouth so long time dumb
That flowers had rooted in the thrifty sod,
Flashes with fire from the volcanic past!
Now by His voice, the voice of God, the shroud,

Weaved by the patient hands of Time, is rent;
The stone is shattered on the sepulchre,
And Death, gaunt Captain of a tragic host,
Marshalls his legions on the fields of thought! —
His voice — O Cain, hearest thou the voice of God?

CAIN

Mother —

EVE

His voice! — What new catastrophe
Impends?

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain! Where is Abel thy brother?

EVE

Abel? —

CAIN

Mother —

EVE

— Cain!

CAIN

Hear me! Hear me!

EVE

Cain!
Where is thy brother Abel? — Abel! — Abel! —
Why art thou here alone?

The voice of GOD

What hast thou done?

CAIN

Mother — it must be thou shalt understand! — Mother!

EVE

Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

Dead!

The voice of GOD

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground!

EVE

Dead? — Cain! Your eyes! Answer me face to face!
Abel is dead? — My child is dead? — and you —

Why are you here alone? — Answer me! —
Cain,
Put both your arms about me pitifully: —
Mine is the very life thro' all your veins;
Body and soul were sacrificed, great woes
And dire travail endured that you might
live! —
Close me within your strong embrace, your
breast
Here on my breast that bled to nourish you,
And tell me — Cain, my first-born and most
loved —
He is not dead?

CAIN

Mother! —

EVE

It cannot be! —
Abel! Abel! Abel!

CAIN

His ears are deaf,

His eyes are blind. Thy heart and mine may
break,
He shall not care: — the man is dead.

EVE

No! No!
God pity me! God pity me!

CAIN

His soul
Failed in the test of truth; he could not bear
The burden and the power of life — and now,
Now is he lapsed into oblivion.

EVE

O son! — Abel! — My child!

CAIN

My heart will break!

EVE

Abel, most young and loveliest child of earth,
Last and most tender of the sons of man,
Mine was thy life, thy death must now be
mine! —

Come to me, Death, divine and silent Death!
Shed from thy noiseless wings eternal sleep,
Pour thine elixir thro' the veins of life,
Spirit of Death, resistless, secret Death!
Since thou hast laid thy finger on his lips
Who was my child, thou canst not leave me here
Telltale of life's disaster, starved of hope,
Curious of nothing in the days to come!
Change in thine alchemy the days of life
To thine eternity, the fever of life
To thy tranquillity, the memories
Of life at last to thy forgetfulness!
Since thou hast plucked the flower and bruised the bud,
Wither the stalk, uproot the parent stem,
Scatter thine ashes, blight the wasted sod!
Let me not linger with my broken heart
To watch with visionless and tearless eyes
The desolation of my destiny!
Nay, let me perish since my child is dead —
I can endure no more!

CAIN

Thou canst not die!
Not alms but wages life demands of death.
Life must be suffered for the sake of life.
And then — Mother! thy sons were twain, —
O Heart,
Wilt thou abandon me?

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
Now art thou cursed from the earth,
Which hath opened her mouth
To receive thy brother's blood
From thy hand!

EVE

Silence! I say — Silence! — His voice has lied!
God's voice has lied! But soul is steadfast — Cain! —
So vile a slander fails its damned intent:
Not by thy hand! Not by thy hand! — Speak! Speak!
Speak to me!

A brief, tense interval of silence.

CAIN

The voice of GOD

Cain! Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

in violent outbreak

Am I my brother's keeper? Nay, by Heaven!
I am the keeper of the gates of life;
I guard the treasure of all humanity:
Mine, mine is life's inevitable trust,
Mine is the sacred heritage of man!
Are not the generations stored within me?
Shall not the harvest yield as I shall sow?
Is not the trust my life was made to keep
Vexed by the hand that mars the perfect seed
Or robs their birthright from the sons of man?
How shall I suffer that such a traitor live
When by his life the future world is doomed
To stumble in the shadow of ignorance
Stung by the lash of self-inflicted fears?
Shall I not rather with violence even and death
Safeguard the treasure in jeopardy and keep
Flawless the sacred seed? What less than all
His just inheritance of power and light

And liberty can man bequeath to man?
Mother — when Abel sought to pawn the
treasure,
Pollute the seed, debase the soul of man —
What could I do but strike the traitor
down? —

EVE

Silence! — Silence! —

CAIN

Heart breaks but soul is free!

EVE

Heart breaks! —

CAIN

I loved him — yet he might not live!

EVE

shrinking suddenly from him

Murderer! —

CAIN

Hear me —

EVE

Murderer! —

CAIN

Be still! —
By God rejected, cursed and shunned by man,
My heart took refuge in the thought of thee!
Wilt thou desert me? — I am Cain, thy son:
Thine by the very deed thy heart abhors! —
Soul of thy soul, flesh of thy flesh I am!

EVE

Thou liest! My son is dead!

CAIN

I am thy son!

EVE

I know thee not! — Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN

He is where all is dumb, deserted, dead;
He lies alone, cold on the mountain's peak;
His shroud is moonlight; round his lofty bed
Great planets veer from verge to verge of heaven,
Like ships of light cleaving a shoreless sea;
The universal multitude of stars

Stare in his sightless eyes; beside his corpse
My broken heart, my whole life's happiness,
Lie in the still companionship of death! —
O I have slain him to my misery! —

EVE

To thy damnation hast thou slain a man!

CAIN

For man's salvation have I slain a man! —
And now, now as thou art my justicer,
Now as my soul lies bare at thy command,
Now shalt thou answer, serving truth in turn:
Tell me where 's Eden? where is Paradise?
Where is the loveliness that pleasured thee?
Where is God's grace that filled thy delicate days
With ripe contentment and surpassing peace?
Where are the candid and beneficent joys?
Where is the primal innocence of man?

EVE

I will not speak!

CAIN

My cause demands—

EVE

No more!—
Ask me no more!

CAIN

At last light breaks within you!

EVE

Silence! Thy words are senseless to my soul.
Paradise?—Eden?—they are lost, God knows!
Lost beyond hope—I know not whither nor
where.
Pure and serene as starlight was my being,
Till time and truth, parents of tragedy,
Scrawled on the tablets of my virgin heart,
As scrawls a stylus on a stainless scroll,
The passionate chronicle of life and death.
Clear were mine eyes and questionless as
flowers
Till the flame-flashing sword of Cherubim
Blinded my vision to all God's glory and grace.

My lips were flushed with laughter and soul slept,
Careless of destiny: — but now mine eyes
Are deep with dreams, desires and lamentation;
Still on my lips beneath the taste of tears
Lingers the fruit's immortal savour; still
Soul thrills with revelation! — Sense and soul
Live and remember — how can God forget?
And unforgetful how can God forgive,
Or teach my feet the paths to Paradise? —
Eden is lost, the light of grace is quenched,
Gone is the primal innocence of man!

CAIN

Gone — gone — shuddering, fading, lost, lost, lost: —
How deep a burial are the seas of time!
All that lived once immediate to our souls,
All that our lives were governed and pleasured with,
Pass and when memory stares with doubtful eyes
Well-nigh her scroll is vacant of their names.

Eden is gone — remembrance knows not where;
Yet, by its loss, was man's existence changed,
Man's soul transformed: thy hand that grasped the fruit,
Why was it so supremely hazardous?
What hope compelled thy venture on the seas,
The sullen shattered waters of God's wrath?

EVE

I served life — life compelled me — life was born,
Born of my deed, and life's creative pangs
Lifted my heart, where love leaped like a flame,
Beyond the bare desire of happiness.
Ask me no more the wherefore of my deeds,
Ask me no more! — When first my brain conceived
Rebellion, and my heart careless of peril
Felt the ineffable longing of liberty,
How could I then withhold my impassioned hand,
Measure my hopes with vile arithmetic

Or count the hazard of my enterprise?
My compass veered, seeking the pole of truth;
Wind smoothed and swelled my lean and wrinkled sails;
My hawser snapped: — headlong I took the seas!
When suddenly life demanded utterance
Was not the destiny of life within me
To make or mar? — Dear God, I could not choose!
I turned from God, imminent of my sons,
And like a priestess at the altar of life
Offered the irrevocable sacrifice
And grasped the ripe inheritance of man!

CAIN

Mother of men! —

EVE

Vain beauty of Paradise,
Barren desire and search of happiness,
Well-nigh of your remembrance is my heart
Vacant and vain repentance moves not me.
There was a woman innocent in Eden,

Glad of her childish laughter and fragile joys,
Scatheless of passionate rapture, — she is dead. —
Is dead, and her repentant heart no more
Beats in a breast bruised with the lips of children. —
The freed slave weeps not for his manacles
Nor can a mother's heart repent her sons.

CAIN

At last, Spirit of Life, maternal Heart!
At last still steadfast, still unconquerable,
Still undismayed I find you tho' despair
Cover you with impenetrable shadow!
Mother of Men, Cain is your very son!
Your words furnish my deed's apology
And plead the justice of my fratricide. —
My heart leaps to your welcome, all my heart! —
Mother! —

EVE

Be still! I know not what you mean.
I know but this — Abel, Abel is dead:

Dead by the murder of your pitiless hands !
Blood-guilt and madness have depraved your
sense ! —
Yet was he very gentle and a child —
Why hast thou killed him ? —

CAIN

When my brain conceived
Rebellion, and my heart careless of peril
Felt the ineffable longing of liberty,
How could I then withhold my impassioned
hand ? —

EVE

Why must you turn my words to shameful
jest ?
Why in sheer insult must you mock my grief?

CAIN

You wrong my soul ! Mother, what is within
me
Seeking translation from my thought to yours
Puts in my mouth what words will serve its
end.

O I am too tragic of all my thoughts and deeds
Too strained past life's endurance of despair,
Had I the will, to mock your misery !
Hear me and let the sword your justice draws
Hang on the thread of my relation. — I
Share your catastrophe —

EVE

Say on — God knows
It matters nothing since my son is dead.

CAIN

Dead ! — and my love was only less than yours !
Enough ! — there has been too much said of sorrow.
Hear me : my tale shall witness what I am.
Alone with Abel in the splendour of evening
I stood exalted on the mountain's crest,
Far in the firmamental solitudes.
We saw together the earth, how fair it was,
Charted beneath us, and the globe of heaven
Poised in august serenity and stained
With sapphire, saffron, and vermilion. —

Heart leaped with wonder! Then was Abel moved,
Staining with blood the stone of sacrifice,
To fawn on God with such base flatteries
As might a slave cringed at his master's feet!
Shame scourged my soul — I poured the lustral oil,
Spilled the new wine, scattered the tender grain,
And sought, mindful of human dignity,
God's fellowship that God may share with man.
And then — then — then — God's voice rejected me!
Canst thou believe? God's voice rejected me!
Even then, then as heart swelled with nameless love,
Then as within me a so stainless hope,
A faith so perfect filled my being with light,
Then as from man to God my soul aspired
With power and incommensurable peace, —
Then, then God's voice rejected me! My soul
Shuddered as tho' a ship that strikes and drowns;

I was dumb; night whelmed me; the world
reeled with storm;
Chaos was in my brain, and fierce despair
Stunned my conception. — Then as one who
feels
The shapes of nightmare fade in the first light,
I felt the ghosts of fear and weak despair
Fade in the breath of a stupendous dawn!
For in the passion of my peril I sought
And found at last who God is, what I am.
As daybreak lifted ever a larger light,
Then all the pageant of the past unrolled:
And I beheld, grave with immortal meaning,
Clear in the unconquerable van of thought,
The dire, dim legend of man's innocence,
The secret of all God's jealous tyranny,
The tree which God's commandment strove to
keep
Inviolate — all the marvel and might of know-
ledge,
The power of life, the glory of rebellion,
The fire and love of liberty, the pride
Of freedom, poverty, solitude, and pain:

All the delight and all the tragedy
And all the burden of manhood — and the soul
Won at so huge a cost from Paradise!
Shining in the white light of revelation
The past stood in my vision and within me
The present hour of life flashed like a flame;
And far, far in the unfathomable, far beyond
To-day or the dumb æons of yesterday,
I saw the vistas of To-morrow fill
With life asking its just inheritance! —
Mother! — so once for thee magnificently
The vision dawned: so even for me it dawned!
And I, nobly resolved in equal trust,
Master of man's prodigious destinies,
Eloquent of august expectancies,
Elate desires, faith ineludible, —
I turned to Abel, brimmed the bowl of love
Deep with new wine of light and gave his soul
The lustral cup, the great communion!
I cried, "Share with me all the treasure and task!" —
A brief pause of intense silence.
Mother! —

EVE

No! — No! —

CAIN

As God rejected me,
Abel rejected me. I was alone!

EVE

Alone —

CAIN

Outlawed from man's love and God's mercy,—
Yet for the sake of man! — for Abel chose
To take the hire and bondage and forego
The inherent spiritual arbitrament
Of manhood for the sins and deeds of life.
Standing against me by the throne of Heaven,
He chose to forfeit all the lustre of living,
And thus, beggared of human quality,
Barren of sin or virtue, void of truth,
Scared at the flashing fire of liberty,
To seek contentment at the feet of God.
And then, then, as he cursed me turned and fled, —
Suddenly as the sea-wind lifts at dawn

And shakes the constellated canopy
Of heaven and murmurs wandering thro' the silence, —
As thou, hesitant ere thy young lips crushed the fruit, —
I felt the destiny of man within us
To make or mar — in him — in me — in man ! —
I called, beseeched him — he was stunned with fear
Of God's revenge; he cowered, turned, and fled !
And then, just as the all-reviving sun,
Even as one who guards a sanctuary,
I struck the traitor down ! — He might not live
To breed a sickness in humanity
And bring pollution to the springs of life.

The voice of GOD

Cain ! Cain !
Now art thou cursed from the earth,
Which hath opened her mouth

To receive thy brother's blood
From thy hand!

There follows a pause of great silence. CAIN looks at EVE with eyes of anxious expectancy.

CAIN

Abel is dead — God speaks — and thou art silent:
My punishment is greater than I can bear!

EVE

the words breaking from her like a cry of pain

My son! — My child! —

CAIN

Mother! —

EVE

O Cain, Cain, Cain! —
Dear God, can life suffer such monstrous things
Nor die delirious of its agonies! —
This is worst, to understand thee as I do,
To love thee living and Abel dead, — and all,

All by thy perfect and implacable deed ! —
O God ! love is a bitter catastrophe !
To understand thee as I do ! — Behold,
My feet pash in his blood to come to thee !
I reach scared hands across his corpse to grasp
Thy nervous fingers stained with fratricide,
And drowned in the dark tears I weep for him
Mine eyes appeal, my voice beseeches thee ! —
Come to me, Child, thou who hast slain my child !
Tragic Adventurer, come home to me !
Come — come — I crave thee with my sorrow's strength :
Here are my arms, here is my breast — I love thee !
Light burns my brain — I understand — I know —
Child, thou hast torn the veils and pitilessly
Shown me the inhuman, flawless face of truth.
At last I know Life is indomitable,
Ruthless because resistless ; yea, and feel
The irreparable necessity of death, —
Tho' Abel lies lifeless beneath the stars ! —

Come home to me, — thy tears shall blend
with mine.
Weep! Weep! so pitiable is man's destiny!
For now, since I have utterly harvested
The whole heavy inheritance of sin
And sucked the apple of Eden to the core,
Now is my knowledge more than I can
bear!
Bankrupt to pay the dreadful price of truth,
I must default all lesser debts of life. —
O I am broken-souled and solitary!
Strong Son of Man, come home, I need thy
love!
Let us together, voiceless of our woes,
Weld heart to broken heart, spirit to spirit,
Since not alone can heart or soul endure
The inveteracy of life and death and truth!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
When thou tillest the ground,
It shall not henceforth yield to thee her
strength;

A fugitive and a vagabond
Shalt thou be in the earth!

A pause. Then suddenly,

EVE

in a terrible voice

Childless!

CAIN

heedless of her cry; to himself:

Destiny! Yea! His voice proclaims
What must be so, the sheer inevitable,
My deed's fulfillment since the choice is made.
I must desire my life lived otherwise
To ask new destinies for the man I am. —
No — No — the price is just: — I choose to pay!
For past and future I will be forever
A fugitive from fear's safe prison-house,
A vagabond of truth's confineless realm,
A homeless pilgrim of the Great Idea!

EVE

Childless! — O God, pity me! God pity me!

CAIN

Hush! God is powerless and His violent hands
Vacant of mercy or vengeance or dominion.
Knowledge is freedom: and for this last truth
My life has paid with bloodshed and bitter sorrow.
Believe! Beseech not! for the threads of fate
Escape the violence of God's sheer caprice,
And on the warp of nature's tapestry
Subtly devise the pattern of men's lives.
God is like one who by the wayside stands
And points to each the inevitable way
That leads him where his will has fixed the goal;
Or like a herald on the battlements,
Vigilant of the stars processional,
Who, when the Virgin and the Huntsman stand
Midmost upon their stately journey, calls
"Midnight!" — and all the sleeping City of Life
Murmurs, "His word has fixed the vagrant stars

And brought to sequence and establishment
The mutable multitude of the errant hours!"
And even as such a one is powerless,
Stretching his debile hands, to leash the Bear,
Tether the Lion, bind the Pleiades,
Or change the gradual periods of Time,
So God is powerless to enact his will,
But, watchful from the tower of thought, proclaims
The imminent and inexorable truth.
Voiced like the thunder, like the thunder he
Hurls not the lightning but proclaims its fall.
He is the creature of our cowardice,
The name by which we conjure, when at last
Suddenly revelation racks the soul
With prescience of the inexorable truth.
I am the Lord of Life, who find my path,—
Haply in twilight — yet the day spring flows!
Each shall pronounce and bear his doom save God;
For, tho' our fears conceive him, he is not.
Life shall transpire in his despite and death
Minister to the weary wayfarer:

The flower shall not be wasted from its bloom
Nor winter yield in the creative sod
At his command but as their Nature wills.

EVE

Hush — Hush — It matters nothing. — Abel
is dead;
Thou shalt depart — and leave me child-
less, childless! —

CAIN

Mother, it must be as the soul demands:
Justice shall not refrain nor truth relent:
What is shall be endured. For life's sole sake
Wast thou creative. Ask no more of life
Than life, for life has nothing more to give —
No alms for misery, no wage for toil —
And nothing less in all the days to come.
Beauty and happiness are casual gifts,
Superfluous splendour of the spendthrift days,
Pearls that adorn the sombre robes of life,
Gathered at random on the shores of time.
The fruit is of thy labour and pain and peril,

Yet life that sows shall reap the harvest. So,
So and forever we sorrow and serve till life
Breaks like a lute-string drawn beyond its strength.
What is the love that made thee mother of men
But life's imperishable desire for life,
The mounting sap, the elemental lust,
Blent in thy heart's alembic with the light
Of lovelier and still human ecstasies?
O Heart, what more or less is love than this?

EVE

Ask me no more! My brain is dying, my heart
Is dying, my body is dying of life's wounds!
Ask me no more — God pity me! God pity me!

The voice of GOD

Cain! Cain!
A fugitive and a vagabond
Shalt thou be in the earth!

EVE

Childless!

CAIN

Nor God, nor life shall pity thee;
But truth shall show thee by what light we live
When all is lost.

EVE

I know for you the light
Shall lift and revelations wake for you.
Yours shall be all the great and lonely joys,
The ecstasy of the imperishable thought
And breathless visions of truth's impartial fire
Dawning on vast horizons of the soul!
Your days shall be ascending avatars;
You shall transcend the realms of time's control,
And pass entire to that eternity
Glimpsed by the soul's astronomers whose eyes
Catch the brief splendour as the fragments flash
Like meteors thro' the stagnant night of life!
But I, I who am Eve and mother of men,
Robbed by the hands of death and by God's hands —

What is prepared for me? Behold me, Cain:
My life is naked, no magnificence
Shall lift the darkness from my haunted eyes!
Cain, I am childless!

CAIN

Yet creative still!
Still shalt thou suffer and weary for thy children,
Tho' truth it is Abel shall come no more
At nightfall, tenderly, to comfort thee,
And truth it is that in the populous earth
I shall be fugitive and vagabond,
Hid from God's face and from the face of man;
And truth it is that for the sole truth's sake
All men who find and know me as I am
Shall rise and slay me in a frenzied fear.

The voice of GOD

Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain,
Vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold!

EVE

Vengeance for Cain? Vengeance, by God's decree,

For Cain, Life's Captain, victor of his cause
In earth and heaven against God's legionaries?
Vengeance for Cain, for Cain the fratricide?
A seven-fold vengeance doomed by God's decree
On whomsoever shall slay the slayer of man?
Verily then the voice of God proclaims,
Obedient to the inexorable truth,
Not His resistless will but what must be!
And yet — why vengeance for the death of Cain?
Wherefore from all men and above all men
Shall Cain be saved?

CAIN

I am the torch-bearer!

EVE

Till now my tears have blinded me; at last
I see and know, — thou art the Son of Man,
Thou art the Saviour — and my son, my son!
Love and forgive me! for the blood of Abel
Rose, a red mist between thy soul and mine!
Now I am weak no more; I say to thee:

Go forth, go forth, lonely and godlike man!
My heart will follow tho' my feet must stay.
Yet in thy solitude shall there be a woman
To care for thee thro' the incessant days,
To lie beside thee in the desolate nights,
To love thee as thy soul shall love the truth!
In her thy generation shall conceive
Passionate daughters, strong and fierce-eyed sons
To lift the light and bear the labour of truth
Whereof the spark is mine, the fire is thine!
Men of thy seed shall scourge the face of God;
Women of her conception shall deride
The laws of men! Singly they come forever
To scare God in His heavenly palaces,
To shake the sleep of the lethargic world,
To wreck establishments and bring to scorn
Laws and obediences and cast
Wrathful derision on the creeds of peace!
The fire you bear invincibly shall pass,
Imperishably shall burn from hand to hand,
From age to age — no power can quench the flame

Flashed from the dawn of soul's eternity! —
And now — Go! Go! Leave me or else I die! —
Go! while the power is in me, — lest I yield!

CAIN

Farewell! Woman, the voice of prophecy
Speaks in your mouth — the light shall never die.
I love you, love you with a measureless love! —

EVE

Cain! — Cain! —

CAIN

Farewell! My will and mine alone
Has made me outcast from the laws of men,
And from God's laws, and from the homes of men.
I am the man I am: no cause but this
Hast cast me naked and lonely from the pale,
To wander, alien in the Academe,
Cursed and derided in the market-place,

Slandered and scourged before the shrines of God.
O I shall weary with all the woes of the world!
And when I shall lift up the immortal light
Like dawn in the dark places of men's souls,
All men shall hail it as a ruinous fire
Born for their world's destruction; they shall rise,
Nerved with ferocious fear, and hale me forth,
Seize me, traduce me, judge me, and condemn, —
And press the hemlock to my unshrinking lips
Or nail my scourged flesh naked to the cross!

EVE

Yet shall the great light live!

CAIN

It shall not die! —
Farewell!

CAIN turns and moves away. The night is ended. On the remote edge of the world, under a line of dark clouds, the young dawn glows,

tawny and splendid. CAIN goes forth straight into the dawn. EVE watches him rapt, transfixed, haggard, agonized. His figure grows small in the distance. The dawn greatens.

Suddenly from the tent is heard the voice of ADAM, just waking from sleep.

The voice of ADAM

Eve!

EVE shudders and slowly turns her eyes toward the tent. ADAM appears in the door.

ADAM

Eve! — where art thou?

EVE

with a great cry

I am woman! —
Mother of men — and childless, childless, childless!

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